

October 25, 2005

House Votes to Establish Inter-Agency Task Force on Aerospace Workforce Revitalization

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. House of Representatives passed a measure supported by Representative Todd Akin (R-MO), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, establishing a federal inter-agency task force on aerospace workforce revitalization. H.R. 758 passed by voice vote last night.

“The aerospace industry is essential to the economic and national security of the United States and this legislation will galvanize the resources of the public and private sectors to expand science and engineering recruitment across the entire industry,” said Akin. In its November 2002 report to the President, the bipartisan Commission on the Future of the United States Aerospace Industry recommended the establishment of multi-agency strategy panel to counter what it termed “the nation’s apathy toward developing a technologically trained workforce.” The Commission warned that this apathy could lead to “intellectual and industrial disarmament” and pose a “direct threat to our nation’s capability to continue as a world leader.”

H.R. 758 charges 11 Executive Branch departments, including NASA and the Defense and Homeland Security Departments, to identify new aerospace workforce training and recruitment opportunities through a variety of scholarship programs in partnership with the private sector and state governments.

Twice a year, the task force, under the leadership of the Department of Labor, would report to Congress on the status of federal policies designed to advance human capital development programs in the areas of science, engineering, technology, mathematics, and skilled vocational trades.

H.R. 758 will contribute to the continuing vitality of Missouri’s aerospace and aviation workforce. Boeing, the nation’s largest aerospace company, employs more than 15,000 Missourians in high-wage production and engineering positions. The average age of the American aerospace manufacturing employee, however, is approximately 51 years, far above the levels that prevail in other high-technology sectors. In 2008, 27 percent of aerospace workers will also become eligible for retirement.

